



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **BLM Extends Deferral of Lease on Bennett Ranch Unit**

The Bureau of Land Management has extended a deferral of a lease sold at its July 2005 oil and gas lease sale. The parcel is on the Bennett Ranch Unit in southern Otero County. The BLM and parties that brought a lawsuit against BLM's plan for managing oil and gas leasing in Sierra and Otero Counties agreed to a February 15, 2006, deadline for deferring issuance of the lease, which was part of an agreement to seek an accelerated hearing schedule from the U.S. District Court in Albuquerque.

"The BLM will continue to defer executing a lease agreement for the Bennett Ranch Unit that is the subject of some of the Plaintiffs' claims in these consolidated cases," said Andrew A Smith, the Department of Justice's trial attorney representing BLM in the case.

"The BLM believes that litigating a potential motion for preliminary injunction for executing the lease would unnecessarily waste the Court's valuable time and delay resolution of the case," added Smith, "even though we firmly believe the Plaintiffs would be unsuccessful, as it would be totally lacking in merit."

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